

...offering
information &
inspiration
to individuals with
disabilities and
their families
as they direct their
own supports and
services



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Planning For the Future: Self-Directed Services Gathering

It's coming! The Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities has announced that the 5th Annual 'Gathering on Self-Directed Services' will take place on March 25 in Somerset, NJ. This year's theme, Planning for the Future, will feature internationally recognized keynoter speakers Al Etmanski and Vickie Cammack, authors of *A Good Life for You and Your Relative With a Disability*, and *Safe and Secure*.

Social innovators and movement leaders, Etmanski and Cammack are founders of PLAN, a Canadian non profit organization created for and by families who have a relative with a disability. PLAN's goal is two-fold: to ensure a safe and secure future for the person with a disability and, in the process, to provide the family with peace of mind. According to Cammack, PLAN is inspired by a simple, yet powerful vision: a good life for all people with disabilities and their families.

"...our theme this year is 'planning for the future', but the conference is also about living NOW."

-The Reverend Bill
Gaventa

"It will be wonderful to have Vickie and Al back in New Jersey," said Bill Gaventa, conference organizer at the Boggs Center. "They came to speak to us when self-directed services were just getting started in New Jersey. Now, they have eight more years of experience and so do we. It promises to be a really exciting day."

"We've learned a lot since PLAN was founded in 1989," says Al Etmanski. "One of the things we have learned is that when families start making plans for the future, they also start changing the present."

Eight other workshops are being planned, all of them meant to be very interactive and discussion-oriented. Topics will include dealing with grief, community connections, legal planning, creating 'circles', supports for direct care staff, a sibling discussion, yoga/meditation, and more. Each workshop will be repeated in the afternoon session, so conference attendees can choose two.

One of the workshops will include a video, *The Ties that Bind*. This award-winning Canadian video features Chris, a young man with multiple disabilities. It profiles his struggle to live a more independent life, and the changes and challenges

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Conference continued from cover

within his family as they grow older, and work on letting go/becoming more independent.

There really will be something for everyone. "This year, we are inviting folks to have a lunchtime roundtable discussion about any topic they want," said Gaventa. "So, if what you want to talk about isn't on the conference program, you can still network with others over lunch and talk about it." Conference participants may either lead a roundtable discussion or join one. Tables featuring a roundtable discussion will be marked by topic or theme.

"Our theme is 'planning for the future,' but the conference is about living now, too," added Reverend Gaventa. "This year, we will learn about yoga, enjoy a jazz show and celebrate with art." An Arts & Crafts Exhibit featuring works created by people in self-directed services is open to anyone who would like to show his/her work. Participants may simply bring art work to the conference for display. Support broker Neeta Das will coordinate the exhibit.

After lunch, several people in New Jersey's Self-Determination Project who are directing their own services and supports will talk about their lives and how they have been growing with the challenges of becoming more self-directed and preparing for the future.

On Friday, March 24, Al Etmanski and Vickie Cammack will be doing a day-long workshop geared towards support brokers and other professionals who work with families and individuals. It is free of charge, with a \$10 fee for a boxed lunch.

"...When families start making plans for the future, they also start changing the present..."

- Al Etmanski

Register soon!

Last year, the gathering attracted over 250 people.
Registration is limited this year to 300.

For more information, please contact:

Bill Gaventa at the Boggs Center: 732-235-9304
or go on-line to <http://rwjms.umdj.edu/boggscenter>

Vickie Cammack is the Executive Director of the PLAN Institute. She is a recognized Canadian source of inspiration, innovative ideas and demonstrable solutions related to community, citizenship and disability.



Vickie is a co-founder of PLAN and co-author of *Safe and Secure - Six Steps to Creating a Personal Future Plan for People with Disabilities*. As a past college instructor at Douglas College in New Westminster, she designed a curriculum process for the preparation of caregivers that is being used in colleges and universities throughout British Columbia. She is the founding Director of the Family Support Institute of British Columbia. She is currently focused on the development, dissemination and application of ideas, concepts and processes that promote a more engaged and caring citizenship. Her innovative approaches to leadership development, social network facilitation and social accounting are key ingredients in her work of taking social inventions to scale.

Al Etmanski is the President of PLAN (Planned Lifetime Advocacy Network) and has been a leading advocate for people with disabilities and their families in Canada for more than two decades. He is widely recognized as a visionary thinker in areas of social policy, community development and individualizing services for people with disabilities.

Al is an author, advocacy consultant and social inventor who specializes in finding innovative, non-governmental solutions to social problems.

In recent years, Al has become known for his expertise in fostering social enterprise within the civic sector, converting social capital to economic capital, the innovative use of non-profit, profit and public sectors as problem solving partners and creating alternatives to legal guardianship.

He is the author of *A Good Life For You and Your Relative with a Disability* and *Safe and Secure - Six Steps to Creating a Personal Future Plan for People with Disabilities*.

New Manual Provides Answers and Help for Administrators of Special Needs Trusts

Last year, the Social Security Administration made three important changes to the SSI program rules. These revisions became effective on January 1, 2005.

The Special Needs Trust Administration Manual: A Guide for Trustees (2005 Edition) is now available at www.disabilitiesbooks.com/special_needs_trust/index.html. It includes the latest changes in regulations and benefits.

It is a valuable reference guide for anyone who is managing a special needs trust for a person with disabilities. In an uncomplicated, user-friendly way, it explains the rules that govern Special Needs Trusts and how those rules relate to the many complicated government benefit programs that assist people with disabilities.

In clear, easy-to-understand language, the authors (all attorneys experienced in guiding trustees through the complex rules of Special Need Trusts) explain how a trustee can use trust funds to meet the medical, recreation and transportation needs of a person with disabilities, without risking the benefits of government programs such as SSI, SSDI, Medicaid, and Section 8 housing.

The Manual is a practical reference book that answers common questions and explains trustees bond, fees, record keeping, accounting requirements and fiduciary and investment responsibilities.

Omission:

The October 2005 issue of *New Directions* failed to credit Michael Steinbruck, M.A., as the author of the cover story: "Finding, Hiring and Sharing Staff: Strategies and Suggestions from Families". We regret this oversight. Mr. Steinbruck is a program administrator at the Boggs Center on Developmental Disabilities where he oversees self-directed supports, training and technical assistance.

Changes to SSI Program Rules

Clothing is no longer considered in-kind income. Formerly, if an SSI recipient received any clothing from a third party (including a Special Needs Trust), his SSI benefit might be reduced. This is because clothing was considered in-kind income. Now the trustee's job should be easier, because she can use trust funds to pay for the beneficiary's clothes without reducing the SSI benefit. Food and shelter are still considered in-kind income that can reduce the SSI benefit.

The \$4,500 limit on the value of an automobile has been eliminated. Formerly, if an SSI recipient owned an automobile, it had to be worth \$4,500 or less, unless it was specially adapted, required for medical transportation, or needed because of distance or geography. Now Social Security disregards the car's value.

The \$2,000 limit on the value of personal items a recipient can own has been eliminated. Formerly, the value of a recipient's personal property (such as furniture, computer, jewelry, etc.) could not exceed \$2,000. Now, there is no monetary limit on that kind of property. The new law affects only personal items. SSI still has a strict \$2,000 limit on liquid resources (cash, bank account, savings bonds, etc.)

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Energy Assistance Program Helps Cover Heating Costs

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally-funded, state-administered program that provides an annual grant to income-qualified people. Those whose income is 175 percent of the federal poverty level and under can qualify.

Last year, New Jersey received \$72.4 million in federal funds for regular and emergency assistance. This served more than 156,000 families at an average \$530 each. This year's allocation, however, is only 95 percent of that, or \$68.5 million. This, while energy costs are estimated to rise 48 percent over last year.

In a letter to Congress, Former Acting Governor Codey called for the federal government to apportion more money to New Jersey in the face of rising costs and dropping temperatures.

County agencies will accept applications for LIHEAP through March 31, 2006.

**For more information on LIHEAP, including where to apply, call
1-800-510-3102**

**or visit www.energyassistance.nj.gov.
www.njhelps.org**

(to see if you qualify for this and other assistance programs.)

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